Historic, archived document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Radio Service

OFFICE OF INFORMATION

1934
TX

MAR 16 1931

HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Thursday, March 12, 1931.

(NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

Subject: "Modernizing the Clothes Closet." Information approved by the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. D. A.

The house next door is one of those big rambling buildings put up during the last century when houses were judged by their piazzas, hallways, big rooms and gingerbread trimming. Plenty of space and plenty of fancy work, but no thought for convenience and efficiency, especially in small details. In those days nobody preached convenient kitchens to save the housewife's back. Big kitchens were the style along with big heavy furniture, big pots and kettles and big rooms. As a result housework was a big job. Nowadays, since so many homes are smaller and since so many families in the larger towns have taken to apartment life, people have begun to think about convenience, in small space. Kitchens are small but are so well arranged that work can be done in much less time. Comfort, convenience, and efficiency are the watchwords everywhere in the house, even in the clothes closet.

Housewives like my neighbor, who live in houses built on the old plan, are remodeling for convenience. They are changing their kitchens and even making over their clothes closets. Often a few simple changes that cost almost nothing will make all the difference in the world when it comes to saving steps and saving work. That's what my neighbor tells me and she ought to know because she has made an uncomfortable old house into a modern, attractive and livable house almost entirely by her own work. During the last month she has been fixing over every clothes closet in her house.

She wouldn't let me even peek at her clothes closets while she was at the job, because she wanted to surprise me. I was so curious to see what she was up to every minute that I could hardly wait, but it wasn't until last week that she came over one day all smiles and reported that the closets were modernized and ready for inspection. At that news I dropped the sock I was darning for Uncle Ebenezer and simply flew over to see them.

"When this house was built," said my neighbor, "closets were just dark stuffy holes where women kept their bustles and hooped skirts hanging on pegs in the wall. Those old wardrobes were such inconvenient places. If you wanted a dress, you had to poke around in the dark and, ten to one, before you found it you knocked half the others to the floor. But modern closets are light, well ventilated, clean and arranged to keep clothes in good order. I'll show you the one off my bedroom first."

She pulled open the door of the place I remembered as a dingy interior spiked here and there with hooks and with one shelf more or less out of reach at one end. Shoes had been scattered about the floor and garments piled one on top of another on the hooks.

The sight that met my eye was entirely different. It was a bright little nook that combined both practicality and beauty. The walls, shelves and woodwork were painted a pleasant buff color to go with the bedroom. Gay clothes bags and hat boxes were made of figured paper and cloth in harmonizing colors. There were shelves for hats, sloping shelves for shoes, a long rod for clothes hangers. And there were even sliding trays for sweaters, gloves, scarfs, and other accessories of dress. A full-length mirror on the inside of one closet door was the only luxury. My neighbor said it was something she had been longing for for years. On the other door was a rack for ties, and cloth pockets holding such extra items as shoe polishing materials and an umbrella. Convenient access to every article and every article kept in perfect shape.

"You see," said my neighbor, "such a well-equipped closet can be fixed up at very little expense and soon pays for itself by lengthening the life of clothing and saving time and expense in caring for them. Garments kept here will keep clean longer, remain in better shape and require less pressing than when they were hung on pegs in the dark stuffy old place this used to be. In fact, I should say that modern wardrobes have two great virtues -- convenience and economy."

I learned from my neighbor that the up-to-date closet is always light and well-ventilated, that it contains rods for hangers, a hanger for every dress and coat, holders for shoes and hats, and light colored easily cleaned walls. Conveniently placed shelves will double the storage space.

For light and fresh air, both useful in keeping out moths and keeping clothes well-aired, every closet should have a window.

"Won't the light from the window fade the clothes?" I inquired.

"No, because all my clothes are hung in these garment bags which keep out dust, cut down the cleaning bill and prevent fading. The bags may be made in colored material to go in with the color scheme of the room. Patterned chintz, or glazed semi-transparent argentine cloth are good materials to use. This material also makes covers to protect hats while they are on racks. I am using hat boxes but many women I know find the racks more convenient. There are nice painted wooden hat holders that stand on the shelves or there are stands of wire that clamp to the edge of the shelf and take up almost no space.

"In big closets like this one it is convenient to have an electric light to save groping for things in the dark. Just now I don't want to go to the expense of extra wiring so I keep a flash light right here inside the door, where I can reach it easily.

"Please notice the floor. It is raised above the floor out here in the bedroom to help keep my closet clean and dustless. And I no longer have it cluttered with shoes, overshoes, umbrellas and so forth as of old that made cleaning so difficult. Instead I have it quite unoccupied so that every inch can be reached by the dust mop on cleaning day."

I spoke of the attractive light colored walls and my neighbor replied, "That is another item for cleanliness. Smooth paint is easy to keep clean with a damp cloth. So is the shellacked wall paper I have used in the front room. The wall paper is very pretty in that closet. I'll show it to you presently."

We discussed convenient rods and hangers. My neighbor says they are essentials in closet equipment and most important in keeping clothes in good order. Closets twenty-six or more inches deep may be equipped with a pole running lengthwise. The rods may be made of a broom stick or a curtain pole. Smaller closets may be equipped with extension rods which pull out and bring all the garments into full view. The convenient height for rods is the shoulder height, and this prevents garments from touching the floor.

"Now let me tell you about storing shoes," said my neighbor. "Shoes take a place of importance on the clothing budget and need the best care to make them last a long time and look well while they last. It's just plain economy, therefore, to keep them in shape with shoe trees and good racks or holders. Narrow sloping shelves, metal wall shoe racks or shoe bags fastened on the closet door all make good holders. For overshoes use oilcloth bags that can be washed frequently."

I did want to tell you about the attractive closets my neighbor has fixed up for her children. But it's getting too late. I'll save that story until next week.

Tomorrow: "Fish Steak for Friday."

***